

Summary

Purpose

This report presents results from five surveys developed by the Food Safety and Inspection Service's (FSIS) Evaluation and Analysis Division (EAD) evaluating the impact of information discussed and satisfaction level of participants attending the National Conference on Animal Production Food Safety. The report also includes recommendations for improving future conferences on animal production food safety issues.

Background

From September 6 to 7, 2000 in St. Louis, Missouri, the FSIS' Animal Production Food Safety (APFS) staff hosted jointly with other U.S. government agencies and industry organizations, the second National Conference on Animal Production Food Safety. One purpose of the conference was to share information with interested parties about current and future planned research and quality assurance programs in the APFS arena. A secondary purpose was to provide networking opportunities among the APFS community. Approximately 240 representatives from private industry, state and local governments, and consumer advocacy groups attended. The first day of the conference was devoted to presenting various perspectives on the current status of food safety at the animal production level, providing food safety research updates and industry updates on quality assurance activities, and describing different agencies' roles, activities and involvement in animal production food safety. During the second day, participants broke up into small groups to discuss pre-determined topics in the APFS arena and summarized those small group discussions to the group at large.

Methodology

Five surveys were administered to the 240 conference participants on the following topics:

- Conference content, facilities, and future conferences (yellow sheet)
- Morning session – September 6 (white sheet)

- Afternoon session – September 6 (green sheet)
- 8:00 a.m. break-out session – September 7 (orange sheet)
- 10:30 a.m. break-out session – September 7 (gold sheet)

Surveys were completed on-site after each session of the conference. Response rates for the five different surveys varied from 19 to 31.

Key Findings

Almost 90% of respondents rated the conference either very or somewhat effective for providing information on APFS *education* activities and learning *how to collaborate* their own APFS activities with others. Over half of respondents rated the conference either very or somewhat effective for providing information regarding APFS *research* activities. Conference attendees reported three main ways that they would use the information they received: (1) To aid in the development of on-farm strategies, programs, and practices; (2) To transfer knowledge of current APFS activities and future direction of APFS activities to others; and (3) To make valuable contacts.

Approximately 90% of respondents declared that the September 6 *morning* session topics will likely have an influence on animal production food safety practices. Approximately 80% of respondents made the same declaration about the September 6 *afternoon* session topics. Recommendations were made to continue to provide industry knowledge and perspective on APFS activities with a focus on quality assurance programs, and information on the latest APFS research and techniques. A number of respondents stated that presenting the *future* role of government in APFS activities is a necessary addition to the agenda. Also suggested was that the agenda provide adequate time for each speaker to cover his/her topic and answer participants' questions. Requests were made to enlist more speakers and participants from industry, specifically producers, and academia, and to hold the conference annually or every two years in St. Louis or any major central U.S. city.

Conference Content, Facilities, and Future Conferences Yellow sheet survey results from 19 respondents

Conference Content

Overall effectiveness

- Almost 90% of respondents rated the conference either very or somewhat effective for providing information regarding APFS education activities.
- Almost 90% of respondents rated the conference either very or somewhat effective for providing information on how to collaborate their own APFS activities with those of others.
- Approximately 63% of respondents rated the conference either very or somewhat effective for providing information regarding APFS research activities. Two respondents commented that not enough information on research was shared. One stated that food safety research needs have fallen far behind where they should be and resulted in a less than adequate amount of information to share.

How conference attendees plan to use the information they received at the conference:

- To aid in the development of on-farm strategies, programs, and practices.
- To transfer knowledge of current APFS activities and future direction of APFS activities to others.
- To make valuable contacts.
- To understand that most animal production concerns are universal.
- To identify questions needing answers.

Future APFS Conferences

Suggested topics:

- Examples of APFS activities that are working/success stories
- U.S. government's vision of its future role on the farm
- Ongoing APFS research activities
- Available USDA funding for education and research activities
- Development of a universal food safety headquarters
- Aquaculture

Suggested speakers:

- Speakers from industry (packers, large food companies, exporters, commodity groups)
- Speakers from academia
- Speaker to discuss global perspective and issues
- Speaker to discuss aquaculture

- Secretary of Agriculture
- Carol Tucker Foreman
- Dr. David Nisbet

Suggested future participants:

- More producers
- More academics with knowledge of research activities
- State and local agency representatives
- Consumer groups

Suggested future location:

- Any major city in central U.S. or St. Louis
- Washington D.C.

How often should conference occur:

- Annually
- Once every 2 years

Conference Facilities

Overall satisfaction

Participants were extremely satisfied with the choice of hotel. No respondents were dissatisfied with any hotel feature they rated. Comments included, "excellent facilities," and "great hotel." A few requests were made to include directions and transportation options to the hotel from the airport in conference materials sent to participants ahead of time.

Morning Session – September 6
White sheet survey results from 31 respondents

Morning session topics

The importance of addressing food safety at the animal production level

Where are we with regard to food safety at the animal production level?

Updates of quality assurance activities

Content of presentations:

- Approximately 90% of respondents declared that these presentations will likely or potentially have an influence on animal production food safety practices.
- Of the approximately 90%, half felt that the presentations will *definitely* influence APFS practices. Reasons explaining the expected impact include:
 - Learning and applying useful information from industry about the latest quality assurance techniques and programs and other on-farm food safety activities. Comments included: “Information from industry groups illustrated what each industry has in place for on-farm food safety.”; “The quality assurance speakers gave a ‘how to’ approach that was very applicable.”; “Industry updates on quality assurance activities provided useful information.”
 - Harmonizing expectations of different groups and encouraging collaboration.
- Of the approximately 90%, half felt that the presentations *might* influence APFS practices. Their uncertainty centered around their view that although the information presented was very good and useful, follow-up is needed to ensure that the APFS community continues to receive and apply the latest information about APFS activities.

Time allotted for presentations:

- Just over half of respondents felt that not enough time was allotted for these presentations. Three overall issues surfaced in the comments:
 - Speakers were rushed and could not adequately cover their topics in the time allotted.
 - Timekeeper should have exercised more control making each speaker strictly adhere to his/her allotted time.
 - Time was not allotted for answering questions at the end of each presentation.
- Most other respondents felt the time allotted was sufficient.

Recommendations:

- Continue to provide industry knowledge and perspective on APFS activities, focussing on quality assurance programs.
- Ensure that the agenda provides adequate time for each speaker to cover his/her topic and answer participants’ questions after each presentation.
- Ensure that speakers strictly adhere to their allotted time.
- Proclaim a contact person for each presenter so materials referenced in presentations can be obtained after the conference.

Afternoon Session – September 6 Green sheet survey results from 30 respondents

Afternoon session topics

APHIS' supportive role in APFS

FSIS' national residue program

Importance of sound scientific research to support APFS decisions

Food safety research in support of animal production practices

Content of presentations:

- Approximately 80% of respondents declared that these presentations will likely or potentially have an influence on animal production food safety practices.
- Of the 80%, 58% felt that the presentations will *definitely* influence APFS practices. Reasons explaining the expected impact include:
 - Learning about the latest research and applying proven techniques in:
 - antibiotic drug residues
 - pathogen detection and control
 - sampling
 - Encouraging collaboration and promoting networking.
- Of the 80%, 42% felt that the presentations *might* influence APFS practices. Reasons explaining the uncertainty about the potential influence of the presentations include:
 - Concern about participants' ability to understand information presented. Some respondents felt that some of the presentations were too technical for the knowledge level of some participants. Comments included: "[some presentations] would have been okay for a meeting of professional scientists with degrees in chemistry and physiology."; "One of the speakers went into way too much detail on the chemical lab methods he used. That was not useful information."
 - Concern about the accessibility of the latest information and technology.
- The remaining 20% of respondents felt that the information presented from these topics would not influence APFS practices. These respondents stated that too much focus was placed on the U.S. government's *current* APFS role and programs rather than in its vision for its future on-farm role and activities.

Time allotted for presentations:

- Approximately half of respondents felt that not enough time was allotted for these presentations. Three overall issues surfaced in the comments:
 - Speakers were rushed and could not adequately cover their topics in the time allotted.
 - Time was not allotted for answering questions at the end of each presentation.
 - Each speaker should be required to strictly adhere to his/her allotted time.
- Another 40% of respondents felt the time allotted was sufficient.

Recommendations:

- Continue to provide information on the latest APFS research and techniques.
- Encourage speakers to present audience-appropriate material.
- Present the *future* role of government in APFS activities in addition to its current role and programs.
- Ensure that the agenda provides adequate time for each speaker to cover his/her topic and answer participants' questions after each presentation.
- Ensure that speakers strictly adhere to their allotted time.

Summary of Break-out Sessions – September 7
Orange sheet survey results from 30 respondents
Gold sheet survey results from 28 respondents

Comments regarding the impact of information discussed during multiple break-out sessions on a variety of APFS issues were varied and sparse. However, a number of respondents commented on essential steps for implementing a successful break-out session resulting in useful information shared among participants that should prove very valuable to conference planners.

Steps to a successful break-out session:

1. Provide a clear purpose of break-out session to participants. State specific objectives when possible.
2. Streamline break-out session topics for focussed discussions.
3. Identify and provide to participants relevant, thought-provoking questions related to break-out session topic.
4. Allow sufficient time for discussion within each break-out session group.
5. Assign a facilitator to each break-out session to keep the group focussed on the purpose and objectives and stay within specified timeframes.
6. Provide general guidelines (for staying on topic) and strict timeframes for presenting break-out session results to the group at large.